



Update, the newsletter of the African Burial Ground and Five Points Archaeological Projects, is published by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI), at 6 World Trade Ctr., Rm. 239, New York, NY 10048. Our telephone number is (212) 432-5707. Send e-mail to: NYABG@worldnet.att.net. *Update* provides current information about New York City's African Burial Ground and its historical context. This publication is made possible with funds provided by the U.S. General Services Administration under contract number 2PCB-CM-97-0154.

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CELEBRATING FREEDOM

Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.

“Why do black people celebrate the Fourth of July when we were still enslaved in 1776?” As a child growing up in Bessemer, Alabama during the tumultuous sixties, this was a question I often asked and never received what I considered to be a reasonable response.

Many years and much research later, I have come to understand and appreciate the many reasons that African Americans had for celebrating “the Fourth.” Africans in colonial America fought on both sides of the Revolutionary War. The British encouraged African men in New York to run away from their enslavers and join the Loyalist forces almost from the very beginning of the conflict in 1773.

The promise of freedom at the end of the war was more than enough to entice African men to participate. The American colonists were however reluctant to enlist enslaved Africans in the troops. It was not until 1781 that the Americans allowed African men to fight on behalf of the colonial rebels. The American colonists vehemently denied freedom to Africans enslaved in the New Nation while declaring the rights of European descended people to be liberated from British colonial rule.

According to historian Leon Higgenbotham, African men were usually viewed as no more than equipment in the eyes of whites. Nonetheless, for enslaved Africans this conflict

Continued on page 3

“Remember me in the spirit of the Sankofa bird – world traveler, poet, social commentator, teacher of African history and innovator of programs. The highest expression of my religion and spirituality has been my attempts to be of service to mankind.” – Dr. John Henrik Clarke 1915 - 1998





LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Compliments and Commentary

I wanted to thank you for your presentation in my anthropology class...my students really enjoyed our discussion about the film, and they (along with myself) admire the work you are doing at the Office of Public Education. You are educating the next generation, in more ways than one. If there is anything I can do to support your efforts, please do not hesitate to ask. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,
Lee D. Baker
Columbia University, NYC

...Thank you for sending us copies of the Classroom and Study Guide for the African Burial Ground Project (third edition). We are pleased to see the results of the project being used in such a positive way. We appreciate the work you and your associates are doing to make the results of the African Burial Ground Project widely available to educators and students.

Sincerely,
Robert A. Peck, Commissioner
U.S. General Services Admin.
Washington, D.C.

Thank you for inviting The School for Academic and Athletic Excellence (SAAE) to the African Burial Ground Project. Class 702 had much fun working and talking to Ms. Marie Alice. Marie Devieux and Donna Cole taught class 702 things we didn't know and things we weren't going to know if we didn't come to the African Burial Ground Project.

Very often I've seen presenters that either 1) know a lot of information yet do not know how to express it to young people, or 2) can relate to the young people but are not very knowledgeable in their fields. Both presenters were very experienced and well-versed in their field, yet were also able to take charge and relate that knowledge to the kids. This is why I'm writing and saying thank you.

Sincerely,
Terrence Allen
NYC

I want to thank you for telling me and my classmates about the African Burial Ground and explaining about the Project. I agree with you on your comment that you made saying

that without other people helping we can't do what we want or make something possible. We need a lot of people to help in life to keep something like the African Burial Ground Project alive.

Yours truly,
Evelyn Jones,
The School for Academic &
Athletic Excellence, NYC

Our summer job experience at the African Burial Ground Project was a lot of fun. We learned how to answer the telephones, worked on computer mailing lists and make photocopies. We also learned how to make educational packets and classroom study guides and sat in on group presentations. We learned a lot of things and met a lot of nice people there this summer.

Very truly yours,
Christa Black & Caesar Bellamy
New York City

[Ed. note: Christa and Caesar were participants in the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) -- See page 9].

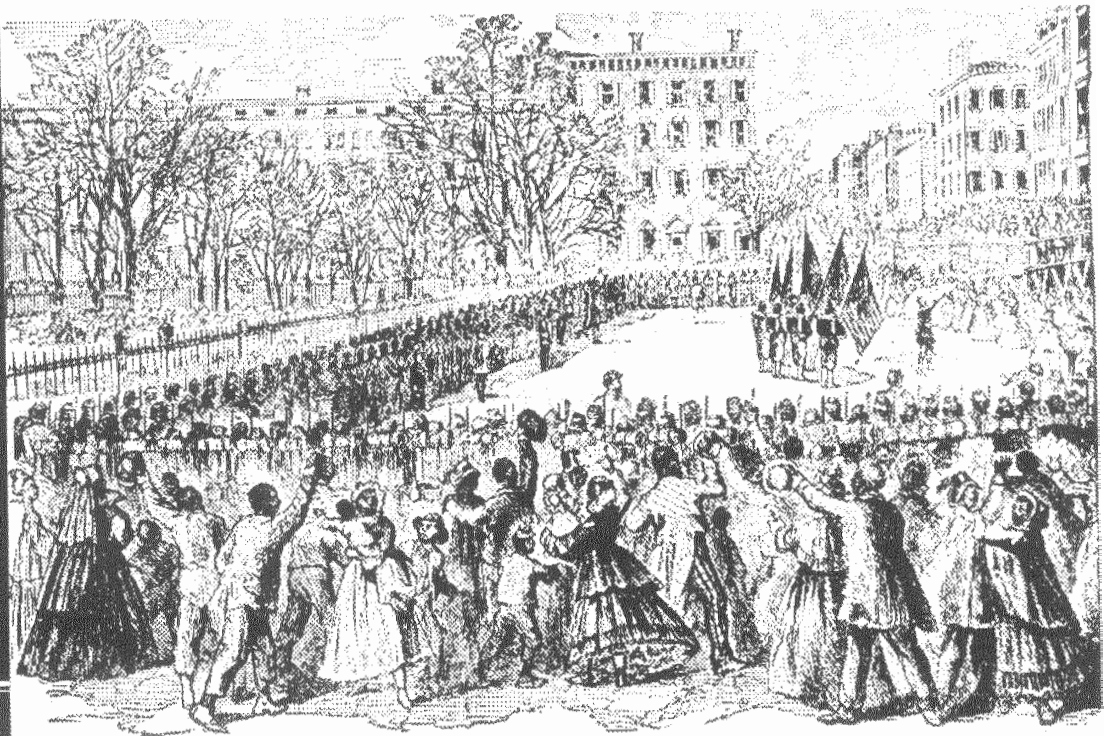
I am writing you to offer my many thanks for your representative showing my African American History class the African Burial Ground on Monday, April 21. They really enjoyed the chance to learn about the history of Africans in New York. They were able to receive first-hand knowledge and view an actual burial ground of enslaved Africans. They were also impressed with your commitment to preserve Black culture. They left the burial ground with a greater sense and appreciation for people of African descent and their history.

Very truly yours,
Robert Morris, Eaglebrook School
Deerfield, MA.

**OPEI welcomes letters but reserves
the right to edit for length or clarity.**

The Twentieth United States Colored Infantry receiving their colors at the Union League Club House, Union Square in New York City, March 5, 1864. This regiment of African American men was organized after the Draft Riots which took place in July of 1863.

Source:
Harpers Weekly
Magazine



Celebrating Freedom (Continued from page 1)

provided a rare opportunity for freedom from enslavement at the end of the war.

In 1785 by special statute African Americans fighting on both sides received freedom. This act transformed the New York City African population from an largely enslaved population to one that was 49% free and 51% enslaved. Freedom however brought very little immediate change, politically and socially for African American New Yorkers. African Americans could not vote or hold public offices. They were forbidden to legally marry whites. They could not testify against whites in any court in the state. Some of the freed soldiers who fought for the British evacuated New York with the British headed for the West Indies, England and

English speaking territories in Canada.

Prominent anti-slavery advocates such as Alexander Hamilton and John Jay had hoped to free all enslaved Africans in the state at the end of the war. Pro-slavery forces, however, prevailed. New York State was the largest holder of enslaved Africans in the North at the time. Emancipation did not begin as a gradual process for African American New Yorkers until July 4, 1827. African Americans however, chose to celebrate this momentous occasion on July 5th.

Freedom celebrations in the North centered on three specific events observed mainly in the states with the largest African American populations -- New York and Philadelphia.

On January 1, 1808 African Americans in both states organized freedom celebrations to commemorate the abolition of the slave trade by England, Denmark and the United States. Illegal trading continued however up to the end of the Civil War. Elaborate church services were held at New York African American churches for the occasion.

Mother Zion A.M.E., New York's first African American church, had a day of celebration that included a fiery address delivered by Peter Williams, Jr., then a divinity student who would go on to become the Minister of another one of New York's earliest African American churches, St. Phillips. Celebrations were organized from 1808 to 1816 in New York. In Philadelphia this holiday was celebrated until 1830.



The general emancipation of African Americans in New York State became the second major freedom celebration in the North. The 5th of July was chosen as the celebration day among African Americans because they felt it very hypocritical to "free" New York's enslaved Africans on July 4th, the day that marked the emancipation of white America from its colonial bonds with England. African Americans in New York and the surrounding states celebrated N.Y. Emancipation day from 1827-1834 in New York City, Rochester and Albany, New York, Baltimore, Maryland, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Parades, picnics and circus performances, along with mandatory church attendance were the means through which African Americans celebrated freedom.

William B. Gravely writes, "July 5th was replaced as a day of celebration by the emancipation of 670,000 bondsmen and women in the British West Indies in 1834. In recognition of their freedom, August 1, 1834 became the most widely commemorated and the most enduring of all freedom celebrations up to the end of the Civil War.

The Civil War which lasted from 1861-1865, at long last ended the legal reign of enslavement of Africans in colonial America. Freedom and citizenship were the hard won legacies for African Americans as a result of the Civil War. "...It is important to realize that these legacies

were not just incidental by products of the conflict. Black men and women worked hard to help win them" (Low & Clift, 1981:61-62). "The conduct of the Black troops had a profound impact on the northern population in general and upon influential Union military and political leaders in particular. In the nineteenth century, the notion of fighting and dying for one's country held an almost mystical power, and the performance of individual Black soldiers in the Union Army helped to win some of that power for their twin causes of freedom and citizenship" (Low & Clift: 63-64).



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This article originally appeared in Through Black Eyes: Revisioning N.Y. History, Vol.1, No. 3, 1992. It has been reprinted in this issue of Update with the permission of the publisher



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Please submit your name and/or corrections to:

OPEI, 6 World Trade Center
U.S. Custom House, Rm. 239
New York, New York 10048

Archaeology and Public Education at the African Burial Ground: The Intern Experience

Monique Scott

How would it feel to hold a 300 year old musket ball one day and research the history of Africans who were runaways the next? This is the experience offered interns at the African Burial Ground Project (ABG) in New York. Interns like myself generally divide their time between the African Burial Ground's Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI), headed by ethnohistorian Dr. Sherrill Wilson, and the Foley Square Archaeology Lab, headed by archaeologist Dr. Warren Perry. Between the two, interns have the unique opportunity to learn from the people who bring the bones to life and from the people who communicate those lives to the public.

Interns are required to dedicate a minimum of 80 hours to the project, divided up in any number of interesting ways. The first step, however, involves training. Interns participate in 12 hours of training which includes meeting with Dr. Wilson as well as reviewing the many African Burial Ground information materials. In reviewing the many newsletters and videos, as well as participating in the public education events, interns become acquainted not only with the project itself but with the complex everyday work of the African Burial Ground staff.

Interns divide the remainder of their 80 hours up into the following five areas: (1) at least 12 hours of general office assistance — things such as assisting public educators with slide presentations, lab tours and site tours, and helping with the necessary everyday office chores; (2) at least 15 hours of specialized

OPEI interns Monique Scott (l) and Allison Manfra (r). In the background is one of many photo images showing archaeologists at work during the excavation of the site.

Photo credit:
Tamara R. jubilee



assistance like contributing to OPEI publications like *Update* and *Cornerstone*; (3) at least 10-12 hours of independent research and (4) at least 8 hours of participation in Saturday public education events. (5) Lastly, interns also — after a nod from Dr. Perry and a tetanus shot — can spend 15-20 hours of their internship time in the archaeology lab.

What brings interns to the African Burial Ground Project in the first place? Most likely the same interest that has grabbed your attention — the interest in the untold African American history of enslavement and in the knowledge preserved in the bones of our ancestors. As both an African American woman and a graduate student in physical anthropology, my interests in the African Burial Ground Project were twofold. I turned to the African Burial Ground to cultivate both my personal and professional identities. As an up and coming black scientist, it is a rare opportunity to — at the same time — learn from and learn about your own community.

Particularly alluring to me was the unique liaison between the Office of

Public Education and the Foley Square Laboratory. It's rare to find such a link between science and the public as exists within the African Burial Ground Project. And thanks to the great communication between the OPEI and the Foley Square Lab, as well as the fact that the lab is located just downstairs from the office, interns can catch a rare glimpse of both science and public education in action.

I've actually spent a good portion of my internship experience travelling those corridors between the upstairs office and the downstairs lab. Down in the lab, Dr. Perry and his team are leading the interpretation of the 600 plus ABG artifacts- including beads, crystals, coins and shroud pins that were recovered from the graves. On top of the awe I've felt seeing row after row of artifact boxes, and feeling the stories and lives that are associated with each one, I've learned one important thing — that the work of real-life archaeologists is very different and much more difficult than that of fictional archaeologists like Indiana Jones! Being a part of the Foley Square Lab, I saw just how hard everyday archaeology can be —



things such as cataloging the multitude of tiny artifacts, determining the location of each artifact in the grave, and each overlapping grave in the burial site. It's actually navigating along 10 foot long burial site maps that becomes the real temple of doom!

Upstairs at OPEI, I've learned equally as much. Working along *Update* editor Emilyn Brown, I've learned the "ins and outs" of desktop publishing and newsletter preparation. I've also watched and learned as public educators expertly handle the multitude of visitors which come through the OPEI each week. Because the mission of OPEI is so huge — meeting the demands of the community and sharing information being extracted from the skeletal remains and artifacts — interns as well as volunteers are needed every step of the way.

As I come to the end of my African Burial Ground Internship, I understand more than ever my role as a black woman and scientist, as a member of the African Burial Ground descendant community and as a person that was called to learn from it. I realize that as a scientist, I will have a responsibility not only to the scientific community, but to the community of my ancestors and the community of my children. Ultimately, as an ABG intern, I've learned that researching the past and preparing for the future is both an extremely humbling and empowering experience.



**Intern to Intern:
An Interview with Intern
Allison Manfra**

In continuing to present an overview of the intern experience at the African Burial Ground Project, I thought it would be a good idea to speak with a former ABG intern turned staff member, Allison Manfra.

MS: How did you first learn about the African Burial Ground Project (ABG)?

AM: I learned of the ABG through the Career Development Services in my school and on the archaeology bulletin board. I was looking for an internship program in Manhattan.

MS: What made you decide to become involved in the African Burial Ground?

AM: I was immediately interested in what kind of work the archaeologists were doing. I have been interested in history taught from the perspective of oppressed people as well.

MS: What expectations did you have of your internship before you began? What work did you expect to do? Were your expectations fulfilled?

AM: I really did not know what to expect. I was very intimidated when I began working in both the office and the lab, but I realized that as an intern I was expected to be inexperienced.

MS: How long did you work for the African Burial Ground Project?

AM: I interned from February until the end of June 1998, and then was hired temporarily for the summer in both the office and the lab.

MS: What particular projects or assignments did you work on both in the lab and in the office?

AM: My office projects included a written piece about the African presence in colonial New York based on assigned readings. I also assisted Marie-Alice Devieux with counting, xeroxing and categorizing signatures for the stamp petition. In the lab, I assisted lab technicians with counting soil samples and entered field notes into a computer.

MS: Where do you attend college? What is your major?

AM: CUNY Hunter College. My major is anthropology and my minor is archaeology.

MS: What are your academic and/or professional career interests and goals?

AM: I hope to continue on to graduate school in anthropology and possibly teach at the college level.

MS: What are some of the things you've learned from working at the African Burial Ground Project?

AM: I learned about the politics of building construction on a historical site. I also learned about the necessity for community involvement, especially in regard to the preservation of one's identity and ancestry.

MS: What were your most memorable moments working at the African Burial Ground Project?

AM: My most memorable moments at ABG include the staff trip to Howard University. The other intern, Ingrid, and I were invited to attend this trip at our own expense. We toured the Cobb lab and met the scientific director, the physical anthropologists, the historians and the Computer Aided Design (CAD) staff.

MS: Thanks so much Allison! It looks like you have a bright future in archaeology ahead of you!



Monique Scott is a Ph.D. candidate at Yale University, majoring in Physical Anthropology.

**To learn more about the African
Burial Ground
become a student intern
or volunteer.
Call (212) 432-5707.**

AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND PROJECT VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Allison Manfra

Ruth Harden has been a volunteer at the Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI) for almost two years now. Her first discovery of the African Burial Ground (ABG) came from a news broadcast on television. Ruth remembers when the human remains were first unearthed, bringing building construction to a halt. She did not become an active volunteer, however, until her daughter, Donna Harden-Cole, a Public Educator at OPEI, became involved with the project. Ruth learned from Donna that she, and others, could volunteer their time in support of the ABG, while learning more about New York history.

Ruth's involvement with the ABG is influenced in part by her interest in history. In 1989, Ruth graduated from the College of New Rochelle, having received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Science. Many of her courses were in urban sociology, as well as the history of the 1920s and 30s. Ruth planned her program to indulge her interest in the Harlem Renaissance. Harlem is, after all, Ruth's birthplace, so it seems natural enough for her to learn its history. She recognizes the important role history plays in one's identity: "It gives you a link to know you belong to something in the past." Ruth is proud of her daughter's interest and involvement with the project, and hopes that Donna's children will be motivated by such experiences as well.

As an ABG volunteer, Ruth assists the OPEI staff during events such as film festivals and symposia. She often greets visitors to these events,



Ruth Harden

Photo credit: Donna Harden Cole

escorts them to open seats, and helps with decorating and arranging snack tables. She is usually stationed at the snack tables because, as a mother of seven, she says she is quite accustomed to handling food. Her assistance has been offered for bulk mailings including newsletters and public surveys as well.

Ruth Harden is no stranger to community involvement. She is the Vice President of the African Heritage Society at the New York City Fire Department. Ruth was one of the founding board members of the society, and just recently stepped down from her position as chairperson of the fundraising committee to accept the Vice Presidency. She co-founded this society five years ago at her place of employment. Ruth Harden is the assistant supervisor of the Telco Unit at the New York City Fire Department Headquarters in Brooklyn. In addition to her full-time position, and volunteer work at the ABG, Ruth coordinates public events and programs with other

members of the African Heritage Society at the Fire Department. These events include the Kwanzaa program in December, Black History month programs in February, and a recent book fair to raise funds for the Fire Department Burn Center. There have also been programs at the Fire Department to assist the campaign for an ABG stamp. Ruth feels that the stamp commemoration is important to honor the lives of the people in the African Burial Ground. At a recent block party on 132nd Street, where Ruth resides, an informal station was set up to collect names for the stamp petition.

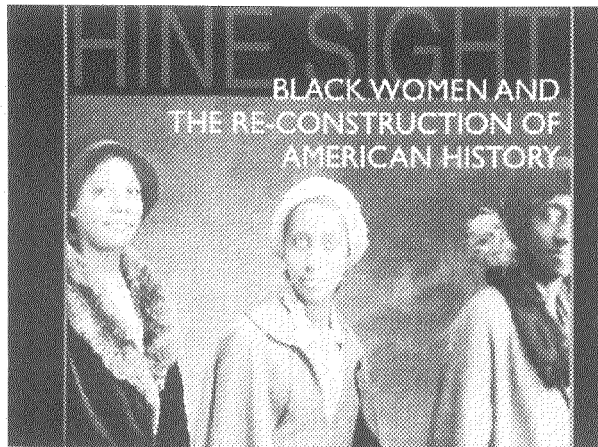
This volunteer shows great interest in the future of the ABG, but wonders if the government will recognize the site and memorialize it properly. She, along with others, has remained dedicated to the campaign for stamp commemoration, but remains uncertain that the burial ground will receive the honor it deserves. She does, however, have definite ideas for the future of the project.

Ruth feels that memorialization should include a museum, as well as an interactive area for young people. Some artifacts should be housed in the museum, but she feels there should be a learning center where people, especially children, could physically involve themselves in activities. One suggestion was a child-size archaeological dig, where children can dig in the sand, and possibly find reproductions of burial ground artifacts. This, according to Ruth, would help to motivate children to learn about the past.



SUMMER READING LIST

Compiled by Sherrill D. Wilson
and Allison Manfra



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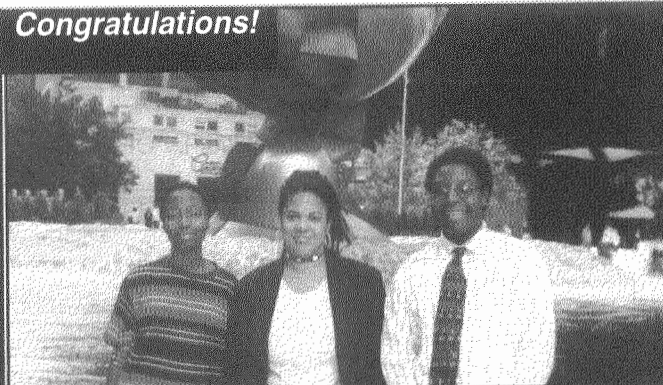
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Congratulations!



Standing beside Public Educator Marie Alice Devieux (c) outside our World Trade Center office are SYEP summer interns Christa Black (l) and Caesar Bellemy (r). Both interns did a wonderful job in helping OPEI to run smoothly. We extend our best wishes to them for a bright and prosperous future!

OPEI Mini-calendar of Events

- ❖ Sat., Sept. 19, 1998 --
Volunteer Training
- ❖ Sat., Oct. 24, 1998 --
ABG Film Festival
- ❖ Sat., Nov. 21, 1998 ---
Educators Symposium

NEWS FLASH!

Newsflash from the Howard University Laboratory.

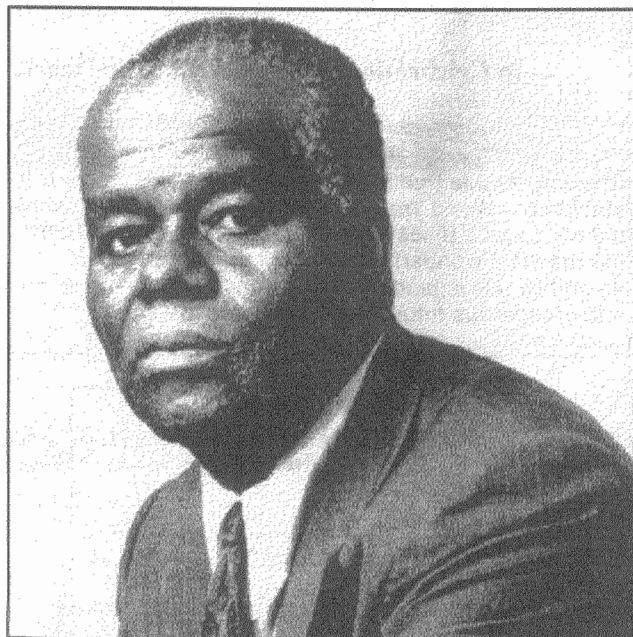
The first draft of the African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Report was completed and submitted to the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) on Aug. 5, 1998. The Skeletal Biology Report is the first comprehensive description and analysis of the skeletal remains. The 190 page draft is accompanied by a bound Case Summaries of about 750 pages, and two (2) volumes of appendices totalling approximately 800 pages of the data on which the Skeletal Biology Report findings are based. All skeletons have been cleaned and reconstructed, with the exception of 5 which will not be studied due to fungal infestation. This report will be revised during the fall of 1998. The reports on the African Burial Ground **History** and **Archaeology** will be completed by the summer of 1999. Our final report will be published and available in time for the reburial of the ancestral remains in the year 2000. These materials are available for review in the Reading Room of the OPEI at 6 World Trade Center, Room 239, by appointment. Please call (212) 432-5707.

— M. L. Blakey



African Burial Ground Update

Compiled by OPEI Staff



Dr. John Henrik Clarke 1915-1998

□ The quote featured on Update's front page is from the obituary of Dr. John Henrik Clarke who passed away in July of 1998. Among the many memorable contributions Dr. Clarke made in terms of educating generations of scholars about African history, was his involvement with the African Burial Ground. During congressional hearings concerning the site, Dr. Clarke was among the many elected officials and community leaders who spoke forcefully in defense of preserving the African Burial Ground. In willing his library to the Atlanta University Center and to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Dr. Clarke, in his own words, hoped to "perpetuate those objectives for which I dedicated my life."

— E. Brown

□ **Senator, Congressmen Support ABG Project.** U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato, N.Y. Congressmen Charles B. Rangel and Jerrold Nadler, and Alabama Congressman Earl Hilliard, Vice President of the Congressional Black Caucus, wrote to U.S. General Services Administrator, David Barram on Aug. 6, 1998, to voice their strong support for continued adequate funding of the scientific research and other aspects of the African Burial Ground Project. The lawmakers stressed the "tremendous historical significance" of the African Burial Ground, noting that, among other things, it stands to become the first African American site to be placed on the World Heritage List (see pg. 14).

— S.D. Wilson

□ **African Burial Ground Project team presents papers at ICAES Conference.** On July 28th, Drs. Michael L. Blakey, Sherrill D. Wilson, Edna Medford, Warren Perry and Mark Mack spoke to attendees on the theme of "Rethinking Bio-Cultural Anthropology for the 21st Century." These papers are currently being organized for publication by OPEI in the Fall of 1998.

— S.D. Wilson

□ **New artwork installed at 290 Broadway.** *Africa Rising*, a sculpture by Barbara Chase-Riboud was recently installed in the lobby of 290 Broadway. Conceived as "an ark of collective history," the 16 ft. tall, cast bronze sculpture was installed on the Duane Street side of 290 Broadway in June 1998.

— E. Brown

□ **OPEI Volunteer Dr. Martia Goodson is currently organizing a second annual Day of Recognition for the African ancestors of New York City.** Anyone interested in helping to organize this event, scheduled to be held at the African Burial Ground on Thanksgiving Day, should attend a meeting on Wednesday, September 30, @ 6:00 p.m. at OPEI, 6 World Trade Center, U.S. Customhouse, rm. 239.

— E. Brown

Related Matters:

□ **Mural Celebrates the Life of Elizabeth Jennings.**

Elizabeth Jennings was an African American woman who successfully sued the Third Avenue Railroad Co. in 1855 when they refused to allow her to board a "whites only" street car. Jennings, defended by Chester Arthur, who eventually became 21st president of the U.S., was awarded monetary damages which were later reduced. Artist Susan Ackoff Ortega has created a 10 x 20 foot canvas depicting these events. It will be on exhibit at Cooper Union's Great

Hall Gallery located at Astor Place in lower Manhattan from Aug. 19th to Sept. 4th, Mon. through Thurs, 9 to 5. The artist is looking for a permanent home for this commemorative painting. A memorial celebration of the 144th year anniversary of Jennings court victory will be held on February 23, 1999. *Update* will publish details when available.

— E. Brown

□ **The Battle to Save Flushing Cemetery Continues.**

Efforts to renovate Martins Fields have been delayed pending the N.Y. Parks Department's non-invasive survey of the area. Meanwhile the process of officially nominating the African and Native American burial ground, formerly known as the "Colored Cemetery" continues. Mandingo Osceola Tshaka is seeking support from the public in this effort.

Call (718) 224-2357 for details.

— E. Brown



OPEI 's First Annual Short Story Competition

In March, 1998, OPEI sponsored a short story competition for elementary, junior high school, and high school students within the New York City area. Based on their creative approach and understanding of African life in early New York, three winners were chosen by a panel of judges involved with African American history (see page 12). Plans for a second contest, to be announced in an upcoming issue, will include short stories, essays and poetry entries.

First Place Winner:

The Slaveland

by Crystal Dones
Fourth Grade
P.S. 75X, Bronx, NY

One day in Africa, the people were invaded by the Spaniards that wanted to enslave the Africans. The Spaniards invaded the land in ships and took the people with them. The Africans were taken from their homeland and held captive until they were transported to Spain.

These enslaved Africans and their family were separated. There was nothing they could do. If they fought back, they would be killed. Once they arrived in Spain they were sold and traded for money. Families were broken up and sold away. Among them was one girl that was nine years old. Her name was Nelle. Nelle was the bravest girl there could ever be. She was separated from her momma but

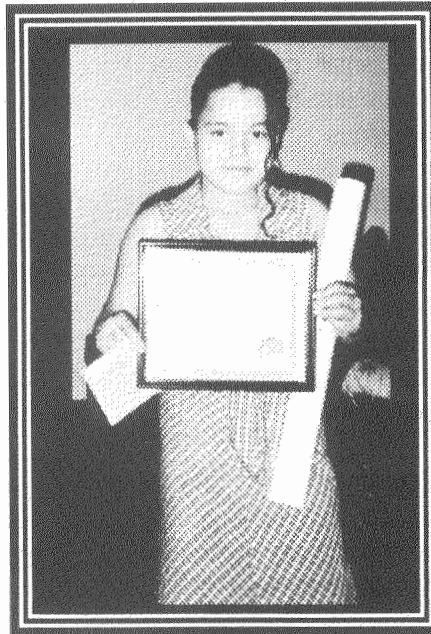


Photo credit: Emilyn L. Brown

she still had her older brother with her. His name was Aspen.

Nellie had four in her family. Her momma and two brothers, John and Aspen, and her little sister Sofia. Sofia and John were together. Nelle and Aspen were together. Nelle's momma was sent away to a far away land.

Nelle wanted to run away from slavery. She wanted to find her other brother and sister. She wanted her momma too. She wanted her family to live the way they used to live; as a family.

Nelle saw her brother John one day. He came to bring a message to her master. When Nelle opened the door to the kitchen, she saw her brother in the living room waiting. Nelle jumped up with joy. She made sure that nobody could see her. She ran to John, and John said

"Nelle, where is Aspen?" and Nelle said, "I have no time to tell you. But I want to tell you that I am running away and I am going to take you and the family back to Africa." When John left, Nelle ran and told Aspen that she had seen John. John was excited. He told Nelle that he was building a boat that was going to take them to freedom. Nelle was so happy. She promised herself that she was going to find her Momma no matter what.

One year passed by and Nelle kept seeing her brother John, bringing messages to her owner. One day John appeared with Sofia, who was now seven years old. By that time Nelle had learned how to read and write. Nelle also knew how to read maps. So Nelle stole a map.

Later that night, when everyone went to sleep, she went looking for her brother John and sister Sofia. Later on Nelle found them. And that same night John, Aspen and Sofia got on the boat and sailed away towards their momma and freedom.

Nelle's knowledge led her to find her momma by using the map. And after two weeks of sailing, they ended up in the West Indies. It was nothing like Africa but they were happy because they were a family again. From that day on, they kept sailing around the world because they didn't want to be separated. Africa was known as "The Slaveland"... and they knew they must never return.



SECOND PLACE

WINNER :

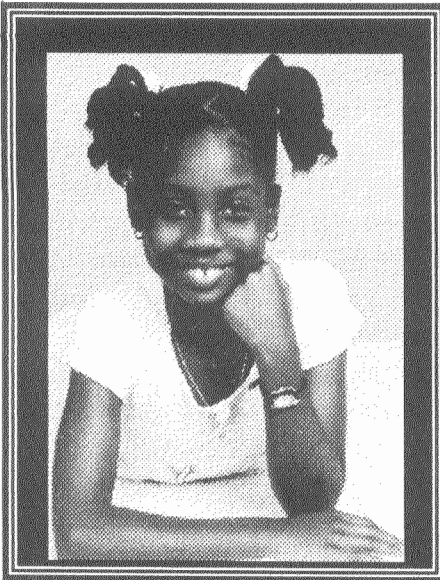


Photo courtesy of Mr. & Mrs. L. Stewart

COMING FROM THE PAST

by Anika Kai Stewart, Third grade,
Alden Terrace Elementary School
Valley Stream, L.I.

One day a girl named Anika and a boy named Din were sightseeing in Manhattan. They wanted to see the African Burial Ground they had heard so much about in the newspaper. Anika and Din were brother and sister. They were both twelve years old. They were also fraternal twins. As they passed City Hall, they saw a green sign that read "Keep Out." Another sign read, "Researchers Only." When Anika and Din looked over the sign, they saw a lot of skeletons that were dug up from under the ground. Anika, who was a dare-devil, wanted to see what would happen if they went beyond the green sign. Din didn't want to go, but he didn't want to wait outside either.

Anika looked around. She didn't see anyone so she went through the wooden fence. There was a hole the size of a big picture frame. The wood was old.

Anika and Din were petite so they could fit through the hole. Anika crawled carefully through the crack while Din crawled carelessly through. When they got in, all they could see were bones. Big ones and small ones. Bones of all sizes. Anika and Din had to hop over the skeletons.

Suddenly, a skeleton popped up! Anika and Din were scared stiff. The skeleton said, "Hi, my name is Soeul (pronounced Soewel). I want to be your friend." Anika said "Hi" back. Din did not want to be a wimp so he said "O.K. I'll be your friend."

Soeul took Anika and Din through a secret path through the bones. He showed them all the places where Africans once lived.

"How did people become enslaved?" Anika asked.

"Three hundred years ago, a Dutch sea captain stole people from Africa to work in New York City. They worked hard night and day. They built streets and buildings with their bare hands. A lot of the Africans were children. They lived in shacks. The shacks were made of wood.

In Africa, there was a king named King Tolu (pronounced To-lo). Tolu means ruler. When King Tolu discovered some of his people were missing, he sent his guards to find them. Months passed and the guards did not come back. King Tolu decided to go to New York City himself. He was almost killed by one of the whites, but one of his men risked his life for the King. "And guess what," said Soeul, "I'm that person."

When the king arrived in New York City, he did not like what he saw. All King Tolu saw were people working furiously. He saw people getting beaten by whites. Just then, King Tolu recognized some of his people! King Tolu's people

recognized him too. They knew he had come to help them.

The whites thought King Tolu was a runaway coming back to free the Africans. So they took him to the beating room to be beaten to death. Suddenly, the whites heard a screaming sound. It was the men, women, and children running toward the room with rocks, long, thick tree branches, knives and whatever else they could find. The whites were surprised. They fired their rifles into the crowd. Several Africans fell to the ground but more kept coming. Whites, hearing the noise, rushed outside to help their neighbors. In no time the Africans were surrounded.

King Tolu cried out to the ancestors for help. The ancestors heard his cry. They filled the air with the scent of daffodils which put everyone in a deep sleep. The souls of the Africans were taken from their bodies and sent back to Africa. The next morning, Africans who had not been a part of the fighting found the bodies of their friends and family. They wrapped them in white cloth and buried them in wooden boxes. The whites who had tried to kill King Tolu were also dead. They were buried nearby.

When the whites heard about what King Tolu had done, they grew afraid and stopped taking blacks from Africa. They were afraid that King Tolu's spirit would come back and punish them for enslaving Africans.

"Soeul, it's getting late," Anika said. "We need to go home."

"Come back and visit again," said Soeul.

On the way home, Anika said, "I'm glad that I am an African American because we have so much history to tell."



Third Place Winner: Essay

I AM PROUD OF MY AFRICAN HERITAGE

by Amanda Holder
Fifth Grade, P.S. 233,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

On Wednesday March 4, my class visited the African Burial Ground, located in Manhattan. First we went to an office in the World Trade Center to view a tape which was about when the Africans were captured and brought to New York on ships, about 300 years ago. They were packed very tightly. They were children, sickly people, pregnant women, and almost dead Africans who were chained together.

Also, there were people who were placed in a small caged area. They were placed according to gender and age. If anyone tried to escape or did the slightest thing, they would be whipped. When they discovered their skills, they sold Africans off in an auction. Families were broken up after a while; many businesses depended on the work of enslaved Africans.

Then, the tape showed us how they were going to build a big Federal Building, and a smaller four story building. Before the foundation was dug, the archaeologists found skeletons and artifacts.

We saw slides of children who never made it to the age of twelve. At least 40% of the burials were children. One of the burials was of a woman and child. Since the child was so young and the bones were delicate, the skeleton did not survive. Another woman was buried with a musket bullet in her ribs. A musket is a long powerful gun.

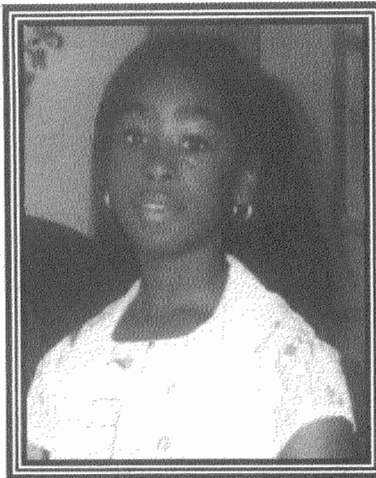


Photo credit: Tamara R. Jubilee

Although there were so many bodies, there wasn't one name found. When the Africans were captured, their original names were replaced by their enslavers last names or they didn't have a last name.

Next, we went to the laboratory. There we saw a map of the burials, they were color-coded, and each burial had its own numbers. We also saw the remains of coffins. Because the coffins were wooden, they disintegrated and only the handles and the nails were left. The artifacts were rusty and started rusting from the inside. There were pennies used to keep the eyes closed. Those coins were displayed at the Foley Square Lab, as well as beads and other jewelry found in coffins. There was a pure piece of silver which could have been sold, but instead, it was buried with a young girl or boy.

At least the skeletons that were excavated are safe at Howard University with Dr. Blakey where research is being done. At 290 Broadway we saw three great paintings, one of the sculptures was a bird's wing. This was a symbol of freedom. The next picture was on the floor; it was a big circle showing the map of New York City and showing the words of famous

blacks. There was also a picture with skulls.

I liked going to the African Burial Ground. It was a good experience to gain so much knowledge. My favorite part of the trip was the viewing of the tape. I like the part when the Africans were brought to New York and were auctioned. I liked this part because I learned about my African heritage. I also was very amazed that I could learn so much about Africans without leaving New York. I learned how slavery was so cruel, and I really appreciate my freedom more.



PARTICIPATING JUDGES

Cynthia Copeland,
NY Historical Society

Miriam Francis, ABG Former
Federal Steering Committee, N.Y.

Dr. Martia Goodson,
Baruch College, N.Y.

Dr. Andrew Jackson, Langston
Hughes Cultural Center, N.Y.

Barbara Muniz, Black American Roots
Society, N.Y.

Phyllis Murray, P.S. 74, Bronx, N.Y.

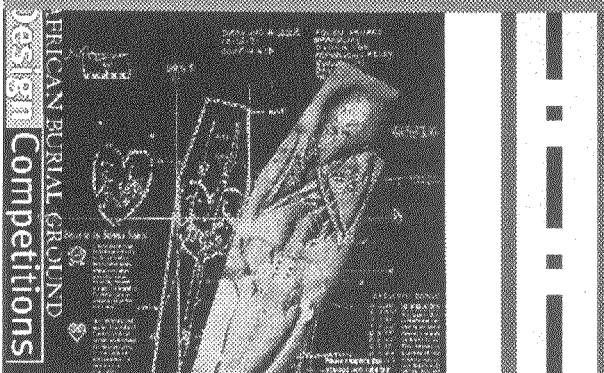
Dr. Willie Page, Bklyn College,
Bklyn., N.Y.

Dr. A.J. Williams-Meyer, SUNY @
New Paltz, N.Y.

Sharon D. Wyeth, author
Upper Montclair, N.J.

Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, OPEI Director.

MEMORIALIZATION UPDATE
From the Office of the Project Executive
Peggy King Jorde



Brochure furnished by the Memorialization Office
designed by S&S Graphics, Inc. NYC

Peggy King Jorde
and Stephen Coleman

Interpretive Center Public Surveys

In collaboration with OPEI, our office recently mailed Public Surveys on the African Burial Ground Interpretive Center to many of you in the local area. Thank you for the feedback we received thus far. Community input continues to be a critical part of the memorialization of the African Burial Ground. If you haven't yet filled out and returned a survey, please do so as soon as is convenient. The comments provided in these surveys will be shared with finalists who will further develop their ideas for the Interpretive Center. Therefore your comments and feedback can help shape the design and content of the Interpretive Center.

After the finalists are announced, public forums will be scheduled. These public forums will be a unique opportunity for the community to share their ideas with the Interpretive Center finalists. The Public Survey will also be available at the Forums. Once the particulars of the Forum(s) are confirmed we'll publicize the event as widely as possible, but *strongly urge* you to call our office for details.

Exterior Memorial Competition

The Exterior Memorial Competition closed in June. We look forward to updating you on the progress of the competition in the near future.



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON MEMORIALIZATION,
PLEASE CONTACT: Peggy King Jorde, Project Executive**
26 Federal Plaza, Room 1605, New York, N.Y. 10278
Telephone: (212) 264-6949; fax: (212) 264-4082
e-mail: peggy.king-jorde@gsa.gov

UPDATE:

**WORLD HERITAGE SITE STATUS OF
NEW YORK'S AFRICAN BURIAL
GROUND**

John R. Arbogast

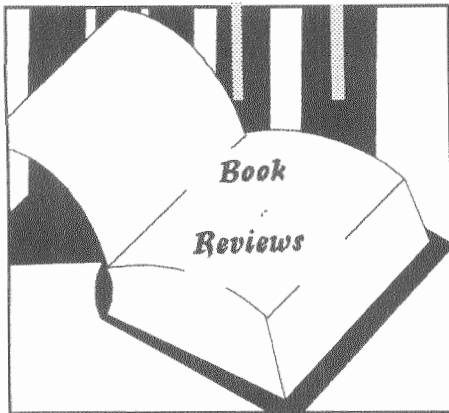
The nomination process has begun to have the African Burial Ground granted World Heritage Site status! (See Update Vol. 2 Issue No. 5). The African Burial Ground will become the first African American related site to be so nominated. To date there is no African American site that has been placed on the World Heritage list. Update readers and African Burial ground supporters and advocates interested in expressing their commitment to the African Burial Ground being granted World Heritage status may do so by writing:

Director,
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20240
Att.: World Heritage Convention-0050

The African Burial Ground Project Office in New York would appreciate copies of all letters submitted to the National Park Service. Please send a copy to Dr. S.D. Wilson, OPEI, 6 World Trade Center, Rm. 239, New York, NY 10048. Tel. (212) 432-5707. Fax no. (212) 432-5920.

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF
UPDATE**

- ▼ A Chronology of the African Burial Ground
- ▼ Voices of Old New York



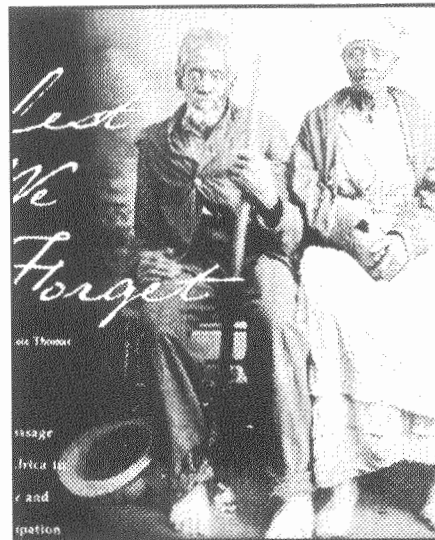
Book: Lest We Forget
Author: Velma Maia Thomas
Publisher: Crown Publishers
Price: Varies from \$25 - \$30
Reviewer: Emilyn L. Brown

Many recent works concerning the Black Holocaust appear to be written primarily for academics. Using dry, over-analytical language, these studies seem to lose sight of the human factor, encouraging some readers to be passive observers. Even worse, a "strictly academic" approach appears to stimulate little or no interest among the young, a generation that desperately needs to understand the importance of history and their place in it.

In *Lest We Forget* author Velma Maia Thomas, curator of the Black Holocaust Museum based in Atlanta, Georgia, recaptures this brutal history in a highly visual way, building on the title theme by weaving historical fact with songs, graphics, photos and three dimensional, interactive replicas of documents from the Black Holocaust exhibit. There are replicas of a bill of sale, manumission papers tucked in a canister, a letter selling an African girl for one penny and much more. Similar to a personalized museum, the combined effect of these documents will certainly generate dialogue about what it meant to be enslaved in a system where violence punctuated long,

work filled days; a system designed to destroy rather than sustain life.

In various passages, the author strikes an important balance between the facts that have survived and situations we can only wonder about, such as the sustaining faith these men, women and children carried to the plantations, towns and villages of the "new world."



This faith was apparent during the Middle Passage when Thomas reminds us that Africans were "Crammed in suffocating heat, held fast by chains bolted to the floor, forced to lie in their own waste, breathing air rancid with vomit, disease and sickness...". To emphasize the inhumane conditions aboard these ships, the author's use of a three dimensional image of a tightly packed ship speaks where words fail.

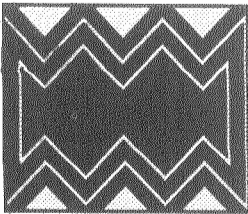
Using the various ads offering "Negroes for sale," which appeared in countless colonial era newspapers in the United States, the chapter entitled "Auction," again illustrates the faith of those who survived the death voyages. [Note: for a discussion about New York City's advertisements see *Update* Vol. 1, no. 5]. A cash receipt

becomes symbolic for the countless number of men, women and children "sold to the highest bidder." Thomas challenges the reader to "...imagine if you will, the sound of bidding, the tears of those as they are torn from their families. What words could you use to console a grieving mother or to heal the anger of a father who feels powerless to protect his family? There in the deepest part of your heart see the auction block and hear the cries. Envision yourself standing there - watching your world disappear."

But the author stops short of portraying enslaved Africans simply as victims, offering an important discussion concerning resistance. Running away, acts of insurrection, arson, and other examples demonstrate the individual and collective counter-measures used by Africans. It is her comments about the historic role of children, often left out of scholarly works, which has the power to inspire our youth. She writes "Even the children, sensing the inherent wrong of slavery acted out in rebellion. Not yet fully accepting their roles...black youth rebelled against the world that refused to treat them as human. There were children among those Africans who successfully staged a revolt aboard... the Amistad. And there were the countless young... who ran off to Union camps, preferring to face the bayonets and gun blasts of war than the whippings and indignities of slavery."

While scholarship has its place, past centuries of enslavement and its repercussions still cast a long shadow over the social, political and economic lives of African people. For this reason, history can and must serve as a tool for building a better future. In *Lest We Forget* we have that tool; a book that succeeds by using a straight forward approach that celebrates faith, humanity and the power of remembering.





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ADDRESS

